

24.3.1 AUTOMATED FLIGHT FOLLOWING (AFF) PROCEDURES

Automated Flight Following is one type of Agency flight following. Automated Flight Following reduces the requirement to “check in” via radio every 15 minutes, and provides the dispatcher with a wide range of information on the flight, airspace, and other data that may be pertinent to the flight. This reduces pilot workload, clears overloaded radio frequencies, and provides the dispatcher with much greater detail and accuracy on aircraft location and flight history.

a. Requirements to Utilize Automated Flight Following:

- Primary flight following for point to point will always be a flight plan filed with the FAA. Secondary flight following will be AFF.
- Procedures for flight requests, ordering aircraft, requirement for a Chief of Party, etc., are the same as radio check-in procedures.
- The aircraft must be equipped with the necessary hardware (transmitter and antenna).
- The dispatch office responsible for the flight following must have a computer connected to the Internet immediately available to them in the dispatch office. Dispatch office(s) responsible for flight following shall be staffed for the duration of the flight.
- Training: The flight following dispatcher must have a working knowledge of the automated flight following program (Webtracker) and must have a current username and password for the Automated Flight Following system.
- Automated Flight Following does **NOT** reduce or eliminate the requirement for aircraft on mission flights to have FM radio capability, and for the aircraft to be monitoring appropriate radio frequencies during the flight.
- When a flight will cross “boundaries” (example: A flight will originate on Unit A, fly on Unit A, then continue on to Units B and C) coordination between dispatch offices of Units A, B and C must be accomplished.

b. Procedures for Utilizing AFF :

- When an aircraft is ordered, or a user requests flight following from a dispatch office, an agreement between the user and the dispatch office must be made that Automated Flight Following will be utilized.
- Other standard information shall be communicated to the dispatch office, such as route of flight, passengers, purpose of flight, radio frequencies to monitor, known flight hazards, TFR information, ETD, etc. (no change from radio check-in procedures).
- The dispatch office must log on to the Automated Flight Following web site, verify that the aircraft icon is visible on the screen, and be able to quickly monitor this page at any time during the flight.
- If the flight will cross “traditional dispatch boundaries”, the originating dispatch office must coordinate with affected units, and establish if the aircraft will be flight followed for the duration of the flight from the originating office or handed off when the border is crossed. Either option is acceptable but must be communicated and understood between dispatch offices and pilots/observers.

- Originating dispatch center will send the flight schedule to all intermediate dispatch centers within the Northern Rockies via DMS. The subject line will follow this standard format: Flight Schedule, date, time, origin to destination. It is not required that intermediate centers be staffed.
- When aircraft is initially airborne, and outside of sterile cockpit environment, a radio call shall be made to the flight following dispatch office stating "Nxxxx off (airport or helibase name) AFF", dispatch office shall respond "Nxxxx, (dispatch call sign) AFF". This is required to positively verify that both the aircraft and the dispatch office are utilizing Automated Flight Following, radios are operational, and that the dispatcher can "see" the aircraft on the computer screen. If there is a problem at this point, revert to normal radio 15 minute check-in procedures until the problem is resolved.
- The dispatch office then sets a 15 minute timer and, at a minimum, monitors the computer at 15 minute intervals for the duration of the flight.
- When the aircraft has completed the flight and landed, the pilot or passenger (observer, Chief of Party, ATGS, etc.) shall contact the dispatch office via radio or telephone informing them that they are on the ground.

c. Procedures for Pilot/Observer:

- Contact dispatch with request to utilize AFF (preferably via phone prior to flight).
- Provide Dispatch with appropriate flight information (same as radio check-in procedures).
- If Dispatch is willing and able to accommodate AFF request, obtain appropriate FM frequencies and tones to be monitored during flight and brief on radio calls you will make and what response is expected.
- Shortly after take off, and outside of sterile cockpit environment, contact dispatch via radio stating "Nxxxx off (airport or helibase name) AFF".
- If radio contact is not made with dispatch office, return to airport/helibase.
- If radio contact is made, and AFF is verified by dispatch office, monitor assigned frequencies, including guard, for duration of flight.
- If a deviation from planned and briefed flight route occurs, contact dispatch office via radio with the change.
- If AFF capability is lost at the dispatch office, or the signal is lost during the flight, flight following will revert to 15 minute radio check-in procedures.
- Monitor the appropriate radio frequencies at all times during the flight.
- Inform dispatch upon landing that you are on the ground.

d. Procedures for Aircraft Dispatcher:

- When AFF is requested, ensure AFF program access is available and request standard flight information from the pilot/Chief of Party (COP). Document using existing dispatch forms and logs.
- Provide pilot/observer with appropriate frequencies to monitor during the flight (Dispatch frequency, National flight following, etc.). Ensure these frequencies are monitored during duration of flight.
- Originating dispatch center will communicate with destination dispatch

center as to who will track on AFF.

- If flight following will be handed off to another dispatch office during the flight, brief this with the pilot/COP, providing frequency change, call sign, and other appropriate information.
- Brief with pilot/observer on radio calls expected and responses you will provide.
- Check AFF system to ensure icon for the aircraft is shown.
- Shortly after take off, pilot/COP will call via radio stating "Nxxxx off (airport or helibase name) AFF". Check aircraft Icon color and verify time and date. Respond to the radio call, stating "Nxxxx, (dispatch call sign) AFF".
- Keep the AFF system running on a computer during the entire flight.
- Set 15 minute timer, and check flight progress as appropriate during the flight. Document using existing forms and logs.
- If the icon turns RED, it means the signal has been lost. Immediately attempt contact with the aircraft via radio and follow normal lost communication, missing aircraft, or downed aircraft procedures as appropriate.
- If radio contact is made after a lost signal, flight may continue utilizing 15 minute radio checkins for flight following.
- In the event that the dispatch center tracking an aircraft on AFF loses internet connection, it is likely that the dispatch center would not be close enough to pick up 15 minute. If unable to rely on 15 minute radio check-ins then flight following will fall back on FAA flight plan.

e. Hand Off Procedures for Dispatch Offices:

If a flight will cross "traditional dispatch boundaries", and the flight following will be handed off from one dispatch office to another, a positive hand off must be made. This must be coordinated between the affected dispatch offices and the aircraft, preferably prior to take off, but may be done while airborne. (Same as radio check-in procedures)

f. Coordination Requirements

Flight following hand offs must be coordinated when using AFF.

- Coordinate with affected dispatch offices and agree on who will be responsible for flight following, how it will be accomplished (AFF and/or radio check-ins), frequencies aircraft should monitor, and if frequency changes are required, when and where they should be made.
- Whenever possible utilize National Flight Following frequency for entire flight.
- Ensure pilots/observers are briefed on any hand offs anticipated (call signs, frequencies and when to switch) and if a combination of AFF and radio check-ins will be required (when and where). NOTE: Remember that Guard is always available to make contact with an aircraft or dispatch office, and then move off guard to the appropriate frequency.

24.3.2 AFF and Tactical Flights

Northern Rockies is not ready to implement AFF for tactical flights in 2005.